

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully submits that the above amendments address the rejection of Claims 1, 12, 18 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. §112 ¶ 1, by correcting the syntax errors noted in the Final Office Action and by correcting other grammatical errors. The amendments to those claims clarify that the coefficient of friction previously referenced in the claims and acknowledged in the Office Action, is a constant reflecting the frictional characteristics of sliding surfaces. The amendments, in addition, clarify the description of the claimed frictional surface(s) that increase the coefficient of friction between the blade spring surfaces, increasing the sliding resistance between those surfaces to provide vibrational damping.

Applicant respectfully submits that the references cited in the Final Office Action do not disclose or suggest the claimed invention, and that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103 should be withdrawn. Applicant and the Office Action differ in their positions concerning the disclosure of Craddock et al, U.S. Patent No. 5,055,088, but agree that "Craddock et al does not disclose a friction surface provided between the contact surfaces of the adjacent blade springs and selected to provide sliding resistance there between effective to damp vibrations of the tensioner." (Office Action p. 3) The Office Action's combination of Craddock with Roland et. al. U.S. 2,920,884, however, does not, and cannot, provide support for the Office Action's rejection of Claims 1, 2, 7, 8, 12-15, and 24 under §103.

The passages from Roland cited by the Office Action, Col. 1, ll. 57-73 and Col. 2, ll. 63-73, in fact, teach away from the claimed invention. Roland discloses the use of a liner insert to decrease the coefficient of friction between the plates of Roland's leaf spring to reduce, or ideally, prevent frictional sliding between the springs. With the Roland liners: "[r]ubbing action

is materially reduced or largely eliminated through use of the present design which is slotted and formed to bridge the space between adjacent plates and which bends or rocks as the plates move parallel to one another rather than act always in shear to rub or slide one or both of the plates." Col. 1, ll. 62-67.

Roland further discloses that, with its liner insert, "[t]here is no sliding action involved except perhaps in extreme positions of displacement of the spring leaves." Col. 2, ll. 3-7 (emphasis supplied). As also explained in Col. 1, ll. 15-47 and 57-63, the purpose of the Roland insert was to replace lubricants and other inserts that also reduced the coefficient of friction between the leaf springs. Roland, indeed, discloses and leads those of ordinary skill to conclude that any friction between leaf spring plates is undesirable and should be eliminated, if possible. This is confirmed in Col. 2, ll. 63-73, (cited by the Office Action) and Col. 3, ll. 5-34, and Figures 4 and 5, which describe Roland's insert and the movement of its of bendable teeth that minimize rather than increase frictional sliding in the spring.

Thus, neither Craddock nor Roland, separately or together, disclose or suggest Applicant's claimed tensioner and springs. Neither reference, in addition, provides the required motivation for the combination as suggested by the Office Action.

The same is true with respect to Claims 4-6, 10, 11, 16, 17-20, 25 and 26. The rejection of those claims under §103 cannot be supported by the Final Office Action's combination of Craddock and Roland for the reasons discussed above.

Similarly, the Office Action's additional citation of the Craddock and McCutcheon et. al., U.S. Patent No. 5,691,037, does not support the rejection of Claims 4-6, 10, 11, 16, 17-20, 25 and 26. As noted above, the Office Action acknowledges that Craddock does not disclose the

friction surface(s) set forth in those pending claims (Applicant submits that there are additional grounds for distinguishing Craddock as well). Applicant respectfully submits that the claimed tensioner and springs further is not suggested by McCutcheon and that McCutcheon cannot be properly combined with Craddock under §103 as asserted in the Office Action.

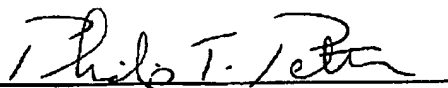
McCutcheon incorporates a viscoelastic material into laminates that are intended to absorb sound and other vibrations in non-sliding planar surfaces. McCutcheon expressly states (e.g. Cols. 5-6) that, unlike the claimed tensioner, the McCutcheon laminate relies entirely on compression and deformation of its viscoelastic-laminate structure to provide its vibrational damping. The passages from McCutcheon (Col. 10, ll. 31-32, Col. 11, ll. 9-16) and Figure 3D cited in the Office Action, in fact, do not suggest or disclose structures providing for a frictional sliding engagement between blade springs such as those claimed by Applicant. Given the different damping approach used by McCutcheon, there certainly is motivation or suggestion to combine Craddock and McCutcheon with respect to any of the pending claims. Moreover, neither reference suggest that, if combined with Craddock, McCutcheon would provide an operable tensioner capable of damping vibrations through the sliding action of spring surfaces.

For the reasons stated above, Applicant respectfully submits that the application is in condition for allowance. Applicant also requests a two month extension of time to respond to the

Office Action and, the fee for the extension and any other fees which may be required to please charge Deposit Account No. 06-1135.

Respectfully submitted,

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